

Wolfe's politics

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 17 Jun 1998

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Dan Parmenter — 17 Jun 1998, 11:32

From: Miles Goosens <outdoorminer at mindspring.com>

And I'm a bit afraid that Mr. Wolfe is turning into an old fart. Not only was the LONG SUN tetralogy a distinct letdown, but I recently read a review that he wrote in which he made lame and gratuitous anti-"political correctness" asides.

I don't think that Wolfe has ever made any secret of his conservatism. He has said that at one time he was a William F. Buckley-type conservative. Now Buckley himself is hardly a typical conservative (he's been pro marijuana legalization for years), so maybe that was part of the appeal. Wolfe has also said (perhaps in the same interview, one of the ones on Paul Duggan's Wolfe page) that he occasionally finds himself agreeing with Pat Buchanan. Now Buchanan, despite seeming like the ultimate "Amerikanner" is also something of an oddity among Republicans; he's been known to criticize the zeal with which big business has abandoned American labor for cheaper climes.

And just to bring it back to 5HC for a moment, VRT/Marsch claims to be a member of "The Laissez Faire Party", which seems to be a sort of humorous variation on libertarianism.

It's hard for me to imagine Wolfe as entirely "anti-PC"; after all, I think that 5HC is essentially a critique of colonialism.

I suspect that Wolfe, like many people doesn't necessarily consider his politics as being reducible to a party affiliation or set of beliefs.

D

Jim Jordan — 30 Jun 1998, 16:58 · follows Dan Parmenter

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Speaking as a long-time conservative:

1. Wolfe's conservationism (environmentalism) is wholly in keeping with traditional conservatism, which is not committed to a total laissez-faire approach to all matters. He's right in line with men like Russell Kirk and Francis Schaeffer.
2. The same holds true of his anti-colonialism. G. K. Chesterton was one of many Catholic and non-establishment Protestant evangelicals who advocated a "little England" and opposed imperialism on moral grounds. It goes back to

Edmund Burke's attacks on how the British abused the Indians in India.

3. It is safe to say that Wolfe started out as a generic Catholic conservative, but as a mature thinker, has become too broad for any kind of typecasting. But his general perspective is going to be pro-Christian, pro-Bible, and thus pretty conservative as compared with modern notions.

4. He is fully capable of sympathizing with anti-establishment movements, as we see in "Hour of Trial." But notice that while Gene Wolfe marches with the radicals, he does so praying the Lord's Prayer!

5. The whole PC movement is so incredibly bigoted and anti-intellectual that it is hard to see why anyone, conservative or liberal, would credit it!

6. But the conclusion of the whole matter is this: Wolfe has said in interviews that he is a practicing Roman Catholic, "but you may not understand what that means." The same is true of being a conservative. A great many people who have not read Christian and conservative (not the same thing, of course) literature have very odd notions about what such people actually believe and espouse.

Just some food for thought.

Jim Jordan

Miles Goosens — 30 Jun 1998, 17:35 · follows Jim Jordan

At 04:58 PM 6/30/98 -0500, Jim Jordan wrote:

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<snip>

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Not to go entirely off-topic, but what Jim is talking about serves to highlight the radical disjuncture between what most people think "conservative" means vs. what academics usually mean by the same term. As Jim points out in #1, philosophical conservatism often questions the morality of a "laissez-faire" market-driven economy, whereas those popularly identified with "conservatism" usually fetishize "free markets" and, in at least this sense, embrace liberalism just as heartily as "liberals"!

But if you tell people that their "conservatives" are really liberals, you'll get nothing but puzzled stares.

I consider myself to be very left-leaning, and not religious at all, but I often find myself in sympathy with those on the academic right. If you think of the range of political opinions as a circle rather than a continuum, the far left and the far right are not that distant... :-)

later,

Miles

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===== "Gettin' piss-drunk, givin' the players a hard time, throwin' a chicken bone at the cop
- that's what baseball is all about."

-- a lout from Cleveland two rows in front of me at
a Tigers game, waxing rhapsodic about how Indians games used
to be

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